



Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG)

Do You Meet the Requirements?

The Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG) is a federal grant program created to help high school students prepare for college by encouraging challenging high school classes. This grant program is different from many other federal grant programs because grant recipients must prove that they have successfully completed challenging high school courses in addition to meeting financial need requirements. The following information will provide you with details on the Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG), how it may help you pay for college. Please note that the ACG will be discontinued after the 2010-2011 academic year.

ACG Eligibility Requirements

Academic Competitiveness Grants are available to students who take challenging classes in high school and who meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Be a Federal Pell Grant recipient for the same award year
- Complete a rigorous secondary school program of study (after January 1, 2006, if a first-year student, and after January 1, 2005, if a second-year student)
- Receive a high school diploma or certificate of completion if home-schooled
- Enroll at least half time in the first or second year of an undergraduate degree or certificate program at a two-year or four-year degree-granting institution
- Be a first-year student who was previously admitted to an ACG-eligible undergraduate program while in high school qualifies if he/ she was above compulsory school attendance age upon admission
- Be a second-year student with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale at the end of the first academic year

Award Amounts

Eligible recipients will be awarded:

- Up to \$750 for first-year students
- Up to \$1,300 for second-year students

Recognized Rigorous Programs of Study a.k.a Challenging High School Courses

In addition to the eligibility requirements, high school graduates must have completed one of the following three options with passing grades, in order to qualify for the ACG:

Option 1.

To qualify for this option, students must have passing grades in the following courses:

- Four years of English
- Three years of math (including Algebra I and a higher level course such as Algebra II, geometry, or data analysis and statistics)
- Three years of science (including one year each of at least two of the following courses: biology, chemistry and physics)
- Three years of social studies
- One year of a language other than English

Option 2.

To qualify for this option, students are required to take a minimum of two Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses while in high school and achieve a minimum passing score on the exams for those classes. Students must score 3 or higher on AP exams and 4 or higher on IB exams.

Iowa College Student Aid Commission

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Your Financial Aid Connection

Option 3.

Option 3 is similar to option 1 which was previously described, but offers some flexibility in fulfilling certain coursework requirements for students who graduated from an Iowa high school.

- Four years of English
- Three years of math (3 years includes, but is not limited to, the following selection or comparable courses: Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, integrated math I, integrated math II, integrated math III, trigonometry, pre-calculus, calculus, statistics)
- Three years of science (3 years includes, but is not limited to, the following selection or comparable courses: biology, chemistry, physics, anatomy/physiology, earth/space science, astronomy, general science, environmental studies, integrated sciences)
- Three years of social studies
- One year of foreign language OR three courses in a career and technical sequence

Students who graduated from high school in a state other than Iowa can check the rigorous programs of study for their state at www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/about/ac-smart/state-programs.html.

Are Home-Schooled Students Eligible?

Yes, as long as the student meets all eligibility requirements and has fulfilled the rigorous coursework requirements of either option 1 or option 2 listed on the prior page. The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) must provide the college or university with certification of high school completion and also provide documentation that the student completed the rigorous program requirements. This documentation may include a transcript (or equivalent) or a detailed course description listing secondary school courses completed by the student.

How Do I Apply?

Complete and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1 of your senior year of high school. If you complete the FAFSA online (www.fafsa.gov), you will have the opportunity to answer questions that will help determine your ACG eligibility.

If you submit a paper FAFSA you will need to call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4FED-AID to determine your ACG eligibility.

Your Financial Aid Connection

If you still have questions after reviewing this guide, or if you would like more information on planning, preparing and paying for college, please contact us. We will connect you to the information and resources you need to make college a success! You may reach us at:

Phone: 877-272-4456

Email: info@iowacollegeaid.gov

Website: www.IowaCollegeAid.gov

Study Tips to Keep Your Grades Up!

Remember, to qualify for an ACG for your second year of study, you must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale. Below are some study tips to help you achieve this goal.

Plan Ahead

Make a term/semester calendar and set deadlines. Have all of your studying done two days prior to an exam. That will give you two days to review.

Attend Class

Read over the lecture material before class to help you focus. Attend every lecture and write everything down. Anything is fair game on exams.

Develop a Place to Study

Although studying with friends at the local coffee shop may be fun, the distractions and opportunities for socializing make it a poor place to learn. Laying down on your bed at home can easily turn into an afternoon nap. To maximize your study time, pick a place where you won't become distracted or disturbed, such as the campus library or study center.

Break Time!

Be sure to schedule brief breaks in your schedule to maintain your focus and keep your mind fresh. Take a quick walk, get a breath of fresh air, or refuel your brain with a healthy snack. Rank your classes and be sure to spend time on your most challenging classes every day. In addition, add an hour to your daily routine to review your class notes for the day.

Don't Be Afraid to Say No

Review your term/semester calendar and the time you have available each day to study. If you feel you have spread yourself too thin, you may need to reduce your outside activities. While it is important to build your resume, it won't be worth the effort if your GPA pays the price. Focus on activities that will mean the most in your field of study.

Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help

Use the resources on your campus if you need help. Seek assistance from your professor, academic success center, or see if your college offers tutors for tough classes.

